

**To:** Yamada, Richard (Yujiro)[yamada.richard@epa.gov]  
**From:** Kuhn, Kevin  
**Sent:** Tue 2/6/2018 6:26:32 PM  
**Subject:** Bruce NAS thoughts - - - RE: NAS Meeting Impressions ...

Hi Richard,

Bringing Bruce's comments on the NAS meeting to the top of your inbox.

Kevin Kuhn

ORD/EPA

(202) 564-4835  
Mobile: (202) 309-3969

**From:** Orme-Zavaleta, Jennifer  
**Sent:** Friday, February 2, 2018 1:58 PM  
**To:** Yamada, Richard (Yujiro) <yamada.richard@epa.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: NAS Meeting Impressions ...

Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta, PhD

Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Science

USEPA Office of Research and Development

DC Office 202-564-6620

RTP Office 919-541-2283

Cell 919-699-1564

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Rodan, Bruce" <[rodan.bruce@epa.gov](mailto:rodan.bruce@epa.gov)>

**Date:** February 2, 2018 at 1:40:12 PM EST

**To:** "Orme-Zavaleta, Jennifer" <[Orme-Zavaleta.Jennifer@epa.gov](mailto:Orme-Zavaleta.Jennifer@epa.gov)>, "Hubbard, Carolyn" <[Hubbard.Carolyn@epa.gov](mailto:Hubbard.Carolyn@epa.gov)>

**Cc:** "Robbins, Chris" <[Robbins.Chris@epa.gov](mailto:Robbins.Chris@epa.gov)>, "Radzikowski, Mary Ellen" <[Radzikowski.Maryellen@epa.gov](mailto:Radzikowski.Maryellen@epa.gov)>, "Blackburn, Elizabeth" <[Blackburn.Elizabeth@epa.gov](mailto:Blackburn.Elizabeth@epa.gov)>

**Subject:** NAS Meeting Impressions ...

Hi all. Impressions of the NAS meeting:

- NCEA leadership and staff did excellent presentations and came over as cutting edge and enthusiastic—much appreciated detail on the processes, methods, and software they use in systematic review.
- Tina and all the presentations focused on the science, and Tina answered questions—even somewhat probing ones on the relationship with OCSPP—very fairly and diplomatically.
- The comment referenced by Buzz Feed came over in the meeting more as a general concern about the importance of keeping her staff, and worries about attrition. It was not said in an intentional political context, or even with innuendo to a political context, but more about general turmoil and resource constraints and the importance of keeping her expert staff, etc.
- NAS panelists seemed favorably responsive to the IRIS efforts.
- NAS panelists honed in on the apical decision point—how to make final decisions on which studies to rely on?—pondering how these critical decision points might also be amenable to systematization, beyond just the publication review process.
- E-NGO commenters (several) were quite political in nature, which actually was not helpful because the NCEA staff stayed on topic to the science. Nancy Beck's name came up a number of times, but not from NCEA staff or the NAS Panel.
- Industry commenters honed on apical decisions still being “wrong”, and that NCEA still keeps making final decision mistakes, such as the recent kidney tumor pathology critique by some members of the CAAC.
- Personal comment: We have some good mid-career staff in NCEA—Tina's young'uns—who came over as very good scientists and a real future resource to EPA.

Bruce D. Rodan

Associate Director for Science

U.S. EPA, Office of Research and Development

**From:** Orme-Zavaleta, Jennifer

**Sent:** Friday, February 2, 2018 12:51 PM

**To:** Hubbard, Carolyn <[Hubbard.Carolyn@epa.gov](mailto:Hubbard.Carolyn@epa.gov)>

**Cc:** Rodan, Bruce <[rodan.bruce@epa.gov](mailto:rodan.bruce@epa.gov)>; Robbins, Chris <[Robbins.Chris@epa.gov](mailto:Robbins.Chris@epa.gov)>; Radzikowski, Mary Ellen <[Radzikowski.Maryellen@epa.gov](mailto:Radzikowski.Maryellen@epa.gov)>; Blackburn, Elizabeth <[Blackburn.Elizabeth@epa.gov](mailto:Blackburn.Elizabeth@epa.gov)>

**Subject:** Re: BuzzFeed article: "We're Terrified": This EPA Program On Toxic Chemicals Is Struggling To Keep Its Staff

Ugh....

Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta, PhD

Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Science

USEPA Office of Research and Development

DC Office 202-564-6620

RTP Office 919-541-2283

Cell 919-699-1564

On Feb 2, 2018, at 12:46 PM, Hubbard, Carolyn <[Hubbard.Carolyn@epa.gov](mailto:Hubbard.Carolyn@epa.gov)> wrote:

FYI.

Carolyn Hubbard

Communications Director

EPA Office of Research and Development

202-564-2189

202-379-6744

**From:** McGuinness, Moira

**Sent:** Friday, February 02, 2018 11:48 AM

**To:** Hubbard, Carolyn <[Hubbard.Carolyn@epa.gov](mailto:Hubbard.Carolyn@epa.gov)>; Blackburn, Elizabeth <[Blackburn.Elizabeth@epa.gov](mailto:Blackburn.Elizabeth@epa.gov)>

**Cc:** Maguire, Megan <[Maguire.Megan@epa.gov](mailto:Maguire.Megan@epa.gov)>

**Subject:** BuzzFeed article: "We're Terrified": This EPA Program On Toxic Chemicals Is Struggling To Keep Its Staff

Just thought you'd want to see this.

**"We're Terrified": This EPA Program On Toxic Chemicals Is Struggling To Keep Its Staff**

*"Believe me, I've shackled and imprisoned them, but they are still going," said one EPA official.*

A wave of retirements has hit the Environmental Protection Agency's research program to identify and evaluate toxic chemicals, and more staff departures are on the horizon.

This staffing exodus comes as the program, called the Integrated Risk Information System, faces a shrinking budget under the Trump administration and a complicated overhaul of how it conducts chemical assessments.

"Right around the winter holidays, we had significant attrition," EPA official Tina Bahadori told the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine committee Thursday. "There's another trend ahead of us. Believe me, I've shackled and imprisoned them, but they are still going."

It's not just IRIS. Staff are fleeing EPA headquarters and regional offices in droves. About 770 employees left between last April and December, according to ThinkProgress. The departures are largely longtime staff who are at or near retirement age and have accepted recent buyouts or left on their own. As part of Administrator Scott Pruitt's strategy to cut the agency's budget, more than 1,200 staff were offered buyouts last year. The buyouts, along with Pruitt's deregulatory efforts, his questioning of climate science, and his close ties to industry, have also reportedly contributed to low employee morale.

When a committee member asked Bahadori if she was concerned about more people leaving IRIS, she responded, "We're terrified of that."

About 10 people have either left IRIS or offices that work closely with it since September, Bahadori told BuzzFeed News, leaving IRIS with about 30 full-time employees and about 35 others who have been pulled in from other parts of the agency to help.

When asked what roles the program is losing, IRIS Director Kristina Thayer told the committee, "I think it's everything."

The lost staff, she explained, had expertise ranging from literature reviews to risk assessment modeling.

When there's been a crucial loss of expertise, "we've either redefined the scope" of work, Bahadori said, "or had to steal and plunder across the agency."

"We've been given permission to do recruitments inside the agency," she later added. "We've been doing ok recently." For example, they are currently on the hunt within EPA to get more public health experts who study the spread and origins of disease.

Related to the brain drain is EPA's squeeze on program resources. Even under former agency head Gina McCarthy there was a decreased use of outside contractors, according to Bahadori. This trend has magnified under Pruitt.

"This administrator in particular is very keen on efficiency and that applies more broadly to the agency as a whole," she said.

Despite these hurdles, IRIS is pushing forward with its overhaul for identifying and reviewing chemicals. The National Academies reviewed the program in 2014, and this week's meeting continues that discussion.

"Being in Washington, there's a constant cacophony about the beleaguered IRIS program," Bahadori said at the start of the meeting. "We do believe that this work is really, really critical and the option of walking away from it does not exist."

Bahadori could have been referring to a recent House Science Committee letter criticizing how IRIS does its analyses, or to a request filed months ago by chemical manufacturing company Denka Performance Elastomer to reconsider a past assessment for a chemical called chloroprene. (IRIS concluded in 2010 chloroprene is "likely to be carcinogenic" to humans, and earlier this week it rejected Denka's request.)

Some speakers at the National Academies meeting Thursday focused on the nitty-gritty of IRIS's new and shifting workflow while others voiced concerns about EPA's new leadership taking advantage of this program review to undermine agency scientists and peer-reviewed science.

Moir

---

Moir McGuinness

EPA Research Editor in Chief  
202-564-1507—desk

202-590-0010—mobile

[mcguinness.moir@epa.gov](mailto:mcguinness.moir@epa.gov)